

Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASMARA 00196 011416Z

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM AMCONSUL ASMARA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3855

AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON

COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC

USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN

COMIDEASTFOR

NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA

NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI

CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0196

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS PINT ET

SUBJECT: TWO-MONTH CALM BROKEN IN ASMARA

PAGE 2 RUFTEFA5196 C O N F I D E N T I A L

1. AFTER ALMOST TWO MONTHS OF UNPRECEDENTED CALM IN ASMARA AND ENVIRONS, TWO INCIDENTS IN LAST DAYS OF FEBRUARY AGAIN CONFIRMED THAT INSURGENTS RETAIN THEIR INTEREST IN DISRUPTION IN REGIONAL CAPITAL AND THEIR ABILITY TO BALK EPMG SECURITY MEASURES. ON NIGHT OF FEB 28/29, TWO LARGE EXPLOSIONS WERE HEARD THROUGHOUT ASMARA AT 0315 LOCAL TIME, COMING ONLY TWO MINUTES APART. SUBSEQUENT REPORTS FROM SEVERAL SOURCES CONFIRM THAT EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE AT ETHIO FABRICS TEXTILE PLANT ON

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PAGE 02 ASMARA 00196 011416Z

NORTHWEST OUTSKIRTS OF ASMARA. REPORTS CONCUR THAT THREE WORKERS ON SATURDAY DAY SHIFT PILFERED SOME SUPPLIES AND ESCAPED INTO

COUNTRYSIDE AFTER SETTING TWO TIMED EXPLOSIVE DEVICES WHICH REMAINED UNDETECTED. EXPLOSIONS CAUSED EXTENSIVE PHYSICAL DAMAGE THOUGH NO CASUALTIES, AND RESULTED IN CLOSURE OF PLANT (EMPLOYMENT 600).

2. PERHAPS SPARKED BY RENEWAL OF HOSTILITIES SATURDAY NIGHT, SUNDAY NIGHT WITNESSED RETURN OF EVENING FIREFIGHTS. FIRING, WHICH BEGAN ABOUT 2030 HOURS AND LASTED ONLY 45 MINUTES, WAS LIGHT AND SPORADIC, CONCENTRATING ON WESTERN EDGE OF TOWN. LOCAL EPMG

PAGE 3 RUFTEFA5196 C O N F I D E N T I A L

MILITARY CONTACTS WERE RETICENT ON BOTH INCIDENTS.

3. IN ADDITION TO THESE INCIDENTS, RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING THAT ELF AND PLF HAVE RESOLVED LONG-STANDING DIFFERENCES AND ARE NOW PREPARED TO LAUNCH JOINT OPERATIONS. SEVERAL SOURCES ALSO REPORT THAT SEVERAL PROMINENT INSURGENT LEADERS ARE CURRENTLY IN VICINITY OF ASMARA. ONE OF THEM, WOLDE WOLDEMARIAM, WAS ALLEGED TO HAVE VISITED A VILLAGE ONLY 4 KM NORTH OF ASMARA CHECKPOINT ON KEREN ROAD.

4. WHILE IT IS IMPOSSIBLE AT THIS TIME TO CONFIRM REPORTS IN PARA 3, TWO INCIDENTS DURING WEEKEND CLEARLY INDICATE THAT INSURGENTS ARE INTENT ON DEMONSTRATING THEIR CONTINUED VITALITY AND SEEM RESOLVED TO PURSUE STRUGGLE DESPITE RECENT INFLUX OF EPMG REINFORCEMENTS.
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